

Salton Sea Research Project

LOCATION: Imperial and Riverside Counties, California.

DESCRIPTION/JUSTIFICATION: The Salton Sea, located in southeastern California, is California's largest inland lake. It is a highly saline lake currently home to 418 different species of birds. A combination of water quality, biological issues, physical geography and fluctuating inflows are threatening the ecological values and recreational uses of the Salton Sea. Additionally, fluctuating surface elevations of the sea have created an unstable shoreline, impacting much of the developed area and the wetland wildlife habitat used by a number of different bird species. The rising sea also has inundated much of the Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge located at the south end of the sea. The full impacts of increasing salinity, the decline in other water quality attributes, and water surface elevation on endangered species that inhabit the sea are unknown, but comprehensive scientific analyses, environmental impact studies and an environmental impact report presently are ongoing. In order to successfully identify and evaluate potential alternatives for remediating the condition of the sea, a continuing program of planning, research, and environmental impact analysis is needed.

The objectives of this program are to identify and evaluate alternatives to: improve water quality conditions; maintain quality habitat for migratory birds and endangered species; enhance the sport fishery; and protect human recreation values in and around the Salton Sea. Environmental scoping and scientific research of remediation alternatives are currently underway. A preferred alternative is scheduled for selection and recommendation to Congress during FY 2001.

AUTHORIZATION: P.L. 102-575 - Title XI, Reclamation Projects Authorization and Adjustment Act of 1992, October 30, 1992; and P.L. 105-372, Salton Sea Reclamation Act of 1998, November 12, 1998.

COMPLETION DATA: The draft alternatives appraisal report and associated NEPA documentation was sent to Congress on January 27, 2000. The public review and comment period ended on May 16, 2000. Based on a review of these comments, Reclamation and the Salton Sea Authority will recommend a preferred alternative and prepare for publication a draft supplemental environmental impact statement/environmental impact report for distribution to Congress during the summer of 2001.

SUMMARIZED FINANCIAL DATA

Program Financial Data

Activity	FY 2001	FY 2002
Water and Energy Management and Development	\$5,165,872	\$800,000
Total Program	\$5,165,872	\$800,000
Prior Year Funds	(165,872)	0
Non-Federal	0	0
Enacted	\$5,000,000	\$800,000
Underfinancing	(325,000)	0
FY 2001 Rescission (P.L. 106-554)	(10,000)	0
Total Reclamation Allotment	\$4,665,000	\$800,000

Total Construction Costs to be Allocated

	Total Estimated Cost	Total to 9/30/00	FY 2001	FY 2002	Balance to Complete
Reclamation <u>1/</u> <u>2/</u>	\$13,675,000	\$4,000,000	\$4,665,000	\$800,000	\$4,210,000
Adjustments <u>3/</u>	10,000,000	418,309	0	0	9,581,691
Total	\$23,675,000	\$4,418,309	\$4,665,000	\$800,000	\$13,791,691

1/ Includes investigation costs.

2/ An increase in Reclamation funds of \$3,675,000 is for a Congressional increase in the FY 2001 budget for specific work authorized under P.L. 105-372.

3/ Includes cost-sharing from Salton Sea Authority, a joint authority of Imperial and Riverside Counties, two local water districts, and the State of California.

OTHER INFORMATION: The Secretary of the Interior on December 19, 1997, after consultation with appropriate local, state, and Federal agencies, announced that Reclamation and the Salton Sea Authority were the joint lead agencies in completing the planning and environmental compliance for a cost-shared effort to restore the sea's health.

On November 12, 1998, Congress enacted P.L.105-372, the Salton Sea Reclamation Act of 1998 which authorizes the Secretary of the Interior, acting through Reclamation, to conduct a feasibility study. As directed by Section 101(b)(1)(B) of this Act, the Department of the Interior transmitted to Congress on January 27, 2000 the findings of the requested studies. The Secretary transmitted to Congress the Salton Sea Restoration Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report; an Overview and Summary of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report; a Strategic Science Plan prepared by the Salton Sea Science Subcommittee; and the draft Alternative Appraisal Report prepared by Reclamation. The documents provided to Congress and the public offer a detailed description of the studies undertaken during the previous 18 months, the menu of alternatives contemplated in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report, the scope of scientific work undertaken and a summary of findings, and recommendations for action.

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Restoration of the Salton Sea is a complex challenge that will require both immediate action, as well as a long-term understanding of the problems facing the Sea, calling for a dedicated but flexible approach. Continued partnerships and collaboration between science and project management, and among Federal, state, tribal, and local government entities and others, as well as continued support from Congress, will be essential for restoration of the Salton Sea to succeed.

APPROPRIATION CEILING: Appropriations authorized under P.L. 102-575 are \$10,000,000. The comparable Federal obligation is \$10,000,000. This authorization is adequate to cover the research and planning program as currently proposed. Any future project development under this authorization would require an increase in ceiling. Appropriations authorized under P.L. 105-372 have no ceiling connected to the work authorized.

WORK PROPOSED FOR FY 2002:

Water and Energy Management and Development - Begins to prepare specification designs related to the preferred alternatives and initiate other related studies needed to support joint efforts with California parties to address habitat conservation activities associated with Colorado River water transfers affecting the Salton Sea. Completes, for the preferred alternative, technical support studies such as enhanced evaporation system (EES) and north wetland pilot initiatives, cultural resources surveys and biological monitoring efforts. Completes any supplemental environmental impact statement documentation necessary to support project components. **\$800,000**

Reclamation Request **\$800,000**